II. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. **(Currently amended)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device;

a collection plate or target tray, stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base, and said collar is positioned directly on the outer perimeter of said first sample processing device;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, positioned directly on the outer perimeter of said first sample processing device, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base, and wherein said second seal is a gasket.

2. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first sample preparation device is a multiwell filtration plate.

3. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 2, wherein said collection plate is a multiwell collection plate.

4. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 2, wherein said target tray is a MALDI target.

5. **(Previously presented)** The manifold of claim 1, wherein said collection plate is a removable support, and said first sample processing device comprises a plurality of wells, and

the removable support comprises a plurality of openings and each opening is in register with a plurality of sample processing device wells.

6. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal is a gasket.

7. **(Canceled)**

8. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal allows for variability in the height of said first device and the collection plate or target tray.

9. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said collar has substantially vertical side walls, and wherein said first seal is created with a gasket positioned within said base, said sealing being along the substantially vertical side walls of said collar.

10. **(Canceled)**

11. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

12. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit is unaffected by the application of vacuum to said manifold.

13. **(Currently amended)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base in sealing engagement with said collar, the base comprising an outer peripheral flange and a side wall which together form a peripheral groove and wherein a portion of ~~a gasket~~ the flange contacts a slot formed in the collar;

a sample processing device; and

a sealing gasket positioned between the sample processing device and the collar, wherein the sample processing device is positioned in a sealing engagement with said collar, and

~~wherein~~ the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base.

14. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 13, further comprising a removable support positioned below said sample processing device.

15. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 13, wherein said sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

16. **(Currently amended)** A method of applying vacuum to a manifold assembly, comprising:

providing a vacuum source;

providing a manifold assembly comprising a base having a port for communication with said vacuum source, a collar, a first sample processing device and a second device stacked to form a sample processing unit; a ~~first~~ seal positioned between said collar and said base, and a ~~second seal~~ gasket positioned between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base;

positioning said collar on said base; and

applying a vacuum to said manifold assembly with said vacuum source, whereby said collar is forced into sealing engagement with said base without causing movement of said sample processing unit.

17. **(Original)** The method of claim 16, wherein said first processing device is a filtration plate.

18. **(Original)** The method of claim 16, wherein said sealing engagement between said collar and said base is adaptable to different sample processing unit stack heights.

19. **(Original)** The method of claim 16, wherein functional inserts are positionable in said base.

20. **(Original)** The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a sample processing device.

21. **(Original)** The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a removable support.

22. **(Previously presented)** The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a MALDI target.

23. **(Previously presented)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device;

a second device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base; and

a unitary seal between said collar and said base and between said first sample processing device and said collar.

24. **(Previously presented)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device comprising a multiwell filtration plate or a single well filtration device;

a second device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base;

wherein the first sample processing device is seated recessed within the collar such that the top surface of the first sample processing device lies below the top surface of the collar.

25. **(Previously presented)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a base;

a collar having a top surface;

a first seal between said collar and said base;

a first sample processing device comprising a multiwell filtration plate or a single well filtration device;

a second seal between said first sample processing device and the top surface of said collar, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base, and wherein said second seal is a gasket.

26. **(Previously presented)** The manifold of claim 25, further comprising a removable support located between said first sample processing device and said collar.

27. **(Previously presented)** The manifold of claim 26, wherein said removable support comprises a support grid.

28. **(Previously presented)** A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device;

a collection plate or target tray, stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal located between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein said first seal and said second seal are a unitary seal, and wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base.

29. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 28, wherein said first sample preparation device is a multiwell filtration plate.

30. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 28, wherein said collection plate is a multiwell collection plate.

31. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 29, wherein said second device is a MALDI target.

32. **(Previously presented)** The manifold of claim 28, wherein said collection plate is a removable support, said first sample processing device comprises a plurality of wells, and said removable support comprises a plurality of openings and each opening is in register with a plurality of sample processing device wells.

33. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 28, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

34. **(Previously presented)** The manifold assembly of claim 28, wherein the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit is unaffected by the application of vacuum to said manifold.

35. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 16, wherein said seal and said gasket are a unitary seal.

36. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 23, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

37. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 37, wherein the application of vacuum source to said manifold assembly does not affect the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit.

38. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 23, wherein said first sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

39. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 38, wherein said second device is a collection plate.

40. (**New**) The manifold assembly of claim 38, wherein said second device is a MALDI target.